

The Role Of the Entourage On Elite Athletes Development And Post-Sport Career
Preparation

By

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April 2014

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all those who gave me the possibility to complete this report. The International Olympic Committee Postgraduate Research Grant Programme deserves special thanks for funding this project.

My completion of this project could not have been accomplished without the support of my advisor Dr. Deborah L. Feltz– thank you for great mentorship.

Finally, to my caring, loving, and supportive friend, Christel Lea Virginia Beverly. I would also like to thank all participants that took part in the study.

AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH RESULT WITH A LIST OF KEY WORDS

By

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The objective of this study was to establish elite athletes (from Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe) career path by tracing their experiences from initial involvement with sport to retirement from competitive sport. The study also provides an in-depth account of the role of entourage members on elite athletes' careers particularly in post-sport career preparation. Lastly, the purpose of the study was to understand athletes' preparation for retirement, psychological impacts of retirement transition and techniques used for post-sport career adaptation. To address the objectives stated above, this study used a grounded theory research approach. Grounded theory can be described as a systematic, yet flexible methodology for collection and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories that are grounded in the data themselves (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The grounded theory approach was chosen to explore the experiences of retired elite athletes and their entourage members because it accords the researcher the opportunity to generate theory rather than impose theory on the data. Although the components of a grounded theory appear in linear sequence, it is worth emphasizing that the grounded theory approach is a recursive process. In practice, the researcher consistently shifts in the data collection and analysis process largely due to a constant comparison method required in the grounded theory.

A total of 17 retired athletes (12 males and 5 females) from various sports (athletics-6, swimming-2, Boxing-2, rowing-2, field hockey-2, gymnastics-1, triathlon-1, biking-1) in Southern Africa and their entourages participated in the current study. All athletes had competed at the Olympics except one athlete who competed at world championships and the commonwealth games. A total of 30 Entourage members participated in the study. The study observed three major and four minor themes from interviews and focus groups with retired athletes and their entourages. Athletes and entourage members consistently made statements that were consistent with the three major themes observed in elite athletes career path, namely *developmental stages*, *dual-career*, and *challenges in elite sport*. The researcher also derived these three themes major themes from the words that athletes used to make reference to their career in sport. Sub-themes observed under the first major of developmental stages were *start*, *junior*, *senior*, and *retirement*. The second major theme observed in the study was *dual-career*. Athletes and their entourages shared with the researcher during the interview process that finding the balance between school and sport was primary in preparing for a post-sport career transition and adaptation. Sub-themes observed under the major theme dual-career were *graduating from university*, *full-time job during one's career in sport* and *part-time job during one's career in sport*. The last major theme observed in the study was *challenges*. It was clear from retired athletes and their entourages during the interview process that athletes faced challenges ranging from lack

of financial resources to maintain an elite sport career. Sub-themes themes observed under the major theme of challenges were *financial resources, trained personnel, lack of facilities, and lack trained medical personnel*. Results from this study are discussed within Wylleman and Lavelle's (2004) lifespan model of athlete development. The primary reason for choosing this model to guide this study is that it considers transitions occurring in the athletic domain as well as those occurring in other domains of athletes' lives. In order to understand elite athletes' career path, it is crucial to take into account developmental transitions occurring outside sport such as athlete psychological, vocational/academic and psychosocial development (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Keywords: Retirement transition, Entourage, Athlete, Olympics, Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most theoretical models and constructs that have been developed on athlete development and retirement transition were carried out mostly in the industrialized nations in Europe, North America and Asia which raises questions of generalizability of these existing models and constructs. This calls for a need to test the applicability of these theoretical models and constructs in other populations such as Southern Africa. This project examined the psychosocial component of Wylleman and Lavallee's (2004) lifespan model using retired Olympians from Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Specifically, the study examined the role of the entourage (coach, parent, federation etc.) on elite athletes' development and post-sport career preparation. This study provided a unique and holistic approach to elite athletes' development and retirement transition by studying a large pool of entourage members. The importance of entourage particularly parental influence on young elite athletes has been widely studied in sports psychology (Bloom, 1985; Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006; Siekanska, 2012; Turman, 2007). Along with parental influence, the studies of youth sport provides a great platform to study parental involvement in youth sports (Gould et al., 2006; Malete, 2006; Russell & Limle, 2013).

High level of parental praise has been associated with successful career development among young elite athletes (Wuerth, Lee, & Alferman, 2004). On the other hand, children's perceptions of parental over-involvement have been related to heightened anxiety and burnout (Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996; Leff & Hoyle, 1995). Cumming and Ewing's (2002) research depicts that parents consistently cross the line between involvement and over-involvement in ways that may hinder their child's experience. It is important for coaches and parents to create an enjoyable atmosphere for young athletes to continue with the sport. Research (Bloom, 1985; Brustad, 1996; Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004) examining athletes' social context and parental role on children's enjoyment and motivation in sport has revealed relations between lower levels of perceived parental pressure and greater enjoyment for young athletes. The social context influencing athletes' participation in sport consists of the child, the coach, and the family environment (Scanlan & Lewthaite, 1988).

Youth sports literature in Southern Africa is inconclusive on the role of the entourage, particularly parents. For example, Malete (2006) observed that the general public in Botswana historically trivialized participation in sports. The language used to refer to sports in Botswana does not help the trivialization of sports participation in Botswana. In Setswana (Botswana official national language), the term sport is loosely translated as *tshameka*, which means play that is not serious and that cannot be considered for anything serious. In *Ikalanga*, (another language in Botswana) sport is also loosely translated as *zana*, which means playing and the word can also be used to refer to someone making a joke. Given the cultural context and perception in Botswana, it is there likely that young athletes may perceive lower parental support than their counterparts from industrialized nations (Malete, 2006). However, there is no doubt that Botswana and the rest of Southern African countries have made significant progress in achieving international accolades and

recognition as a major player in international sports. Participation in sports has significantly increased in the past ten years. Numerous opportunities availed to athletes such as international travel and overseas sports scholarships have changed a lot of parents' attitudes towards participation in sports.

The introduction of physical education and sports programs in secondary schools has led to a significant increase in participation in sports across schools in Southern Africa. Even though teachers in many schools in Southern Africa volunteer, it is part of a lot of teachers' jobs to coach, be umpires, and organize intra- and extra-mural sport events. As a result, teachers in most African countries are not only in a position to widen youth sport participation but to inspire life-long physical activity and encourage attainment of self-directed sport aspirations (Shehu & Akpata, 2008). There is also a growing trend in the youth literature focusing specifically life skills and the use of sports to cope with HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa.

The current study investigated a large pool of entourage members that include federations, spouses and coaches on the role they play throughout elite athletes careers. Evidence provided in research affirms that parents, coaches, and peers provide social support throughout an athletic career taking into account within career transition and transition out of competitive sport (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). Even though research on elite athletes' development and retirement transition is being conducted around the world, the majority of research targets specific entourage members such as coaches and parents and national samples, cross-cultural studies are limited (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007; Huang, Schmidt, Hackfort, & Si, 2001). The current study did not only look at specific roles of unique members of the entourage but also made a cross-cultural and a cross-national comparison of elite athletes from four different countries.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to establish elite athletes' career paths in Southern Africa. The study traced athletes' experiences from initial involvement with sport to their retirement from competitive sport. The second objective was to provide an in-depth account of the role of entourage members in elite athletes' careers particularly in post-sport career preparation. Lastly, the purpose of the study was to understand athletes' psychological impacts of retirement transition from competitive sport and techniques used for post-sport career adaptation.

The following were sub objectives of the study:

- Profile each elite athlete by entourage
- Examine if there are transition services for retired athletes
- Provide recommendations to federations on services for retirement transition.

Academic significance of the study

This study is significant to the academic world in many respects. First, the study contributes significant knowledge to the existing literature on athlete development and retirement transition. The current study does not only focus on parental involvement, but a large pool of entourage members that include federations and spouses which are less studied in sports psychology literature. The gap of limited and insufficient knowledge to understand the role of federations and spouses on athletes' retirement transition will be addressed in this study. Even though Southern Africa started participating in the Olympics as early as 1904, it is one of the less understood and less studied area in the world. As presented earlier, most theoretical models and constructs on athlete development and retirement transition have been carried out in North America, Western Europe and Asia. The applicability of these constructs in Southern Africa needs to be tested to confirm their generalizability. It is therefore crucial that sport psychology research to appreciate the diversity offered by different athletes across the world. Further to that, this study takes a holistic approach to study the athlete entire athletic career as well as include all entourage members in order to have a diverse cultural understanding to constructs being studied. A diverse cultural understanding can only be achieved through studies that include unique samples such as Olympians from Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. The study has provided recommendations based on findings obtained through in-depth interviews and focus groups.

Significance to the Olympic Movement

The goal of the Olympic Movement is to build a peaceful and better world by educating young people through sport practiced in accordance with Olympism and its values “(Olympic Charter, 2011, Rule 1). For this particular project, I looked at circumstances surrounding Southern Africa. Even though athletes in Southern Africa have experienced significant challenges such as lack of financial resources and political interference in their athletic career, they have a considerable record of winning medals in individual sport such as athletics and swimming. On the Olympic Podium, athletes from Southern Africa represented only the tip of the iceberg of the Olympic Movement. Olympians are role models to millions of young kids in Southern Africa that do not only aspire to be Olympians but to also have other professional careers (i.e., doctor, lawyer and professor). It is therefore crucial that Olympians do not only win medals but also succeed in their post sport careers. Consistent with Olympism, creating a way of life based on joy and educational values should be emphasized to athletes particularly at a young age to prepare them for life as role models. One of the primary goals of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination. It was evident in this study that even though there are race and discrimination issues that needs to be addressed, countries like South Africa made significant progress in using sport for nation building in promoting the rainbow nation.

This study provides recommendations to federation and governments on stages that will provide an insightful understanding and guidance not only on the role of the entourage but also on the role of the elite athletes themselves. Part of their role can be to build a peaceful and better world by educating young people and instilling the Olympism philosophy through programs that will be informed by this project. The philosophy of ‘Olympism’, which was developed by the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, has its focus not only on elite athletes but everyone. Africa should not be left behind in educating young elite athletes. It was clear in the data analysis that young athletes strive to provide for their families and find ways to help their families move out of poverty. Given the role of schools in athletes’ development, the Olympic Movement should work closely with schools to enhance the already existing educational programs for young elite athletes. The provision of tutoring services and a flexible educational system that will accord athletes’ the opportunity to train and have time to study.

METHODOLOGY

The current study examined the role of the entourage on elite athletes' (i.e., coaches, parents, spouses and sports federations) development and retirement transition. Presented in this chapter are methods and procedures used in the conduct of the research. The following format will be followed in the presentation of this chapter; research design, sample, procedures, and data analysis.

Research design

To address the problem stated above, this study used a grounded theory research approach. The notion of grounded theory approach was developed by the work of sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory can be described as a systematic, yet flexible methodology for collection and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories that are grounded in the data themselves (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The grounded theory approach was chosen to explore the experiences of retired elite athletes and their entourage members because it accords the researcher the opportunity to generate theory rather than impose theory on the data. Although the components of a grounded theory appear in linear sequence, it is worth emphasizing that the grounded theory approach is a recursive process. In practice, the researcher consistently shifts in the data collection and analysis process largely due to a constant comparison method required in the grounded theory.

Participants

A total of 17 retired athletes (12 males and 5 females) from various sports (athletics-6, swimming-2, Boxing-2, rowing-2, field hockey-2, gymnastics-1, triathlon-1, biking-1) in Southern Africa and their entourages participated in the current study. All athletes had competed at the Olympics except one athlete who had competed at world championships and the commonwealth games. A total of 30 Entourage members participated in the study.

Procedure

National Olympic Committees of Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia were contacted to facilitate the recruitment process. Personalized recruitment letters were then sent to each individual retired athlete recruiting them to take part in the study. Participants were awarded a \$50 gift card or cash for participating in the study. Recruitment letters had the Michigan State University letterhead. The researcher was granted the research permit by Michigan State University Institutional Review Board and National Olympic Committees of participating countries. Data collection was carried out in three phases.

Phase I-The first phase comprised a 15-minute online demographic survey that was emailed to athlete participants after they agreed to participate in the study. The demographic questionnaire sought information such as age, type of sport, time of retirement and if athletes were ready for retirement. The primary reason for Phase I data collection was to focus interviews and give the researcher more information about the

participant prior to the interview process. Participants were given five days to respond to the online survey and follow-ups were made where necessary.

Phase II-The second phase involved in-depth online (via Skype/phone) interviews. Each in-depth interview lasted 45 to 55 minutes. All athletes and their entourage members were interviewed. Given the distance and time difference between where the researcher lives and where participants live, Skype/telephone were the most viable way to conduct interviews. The researcher also traveled to the site to conduct interviews with participants that were not available for a Skype/telephone interview.

Phase III-The third phase of data collection consisted of focus groups with retired athletes from South Africa, Botswana and spouses of athletes from Botswana. Focus groups were conducted separately for each set of participants and they were conducted on separate date. Botswana focus groups were conducted at the University of Botswana (UB) and for South Africa; they were conducted at the South Africa Sport Confederation of Olympic Committee (SASCOC). Focus groups were used for triangulation purposes as a data quality control measure as well as to follow-up on questions that were not answered or emerged during the interview process. Interviews and focus groups with multiple samples (athletes, parents, spouses, coaches ad federation) accords the researcher the opportunity to triangulate data and use different data sources as a quality control measure. Retired athlete focus groups were conducted first and followed by spouses' focus group.

Instruments

The conceptual model of adaptation to career transition (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998) and the lifespan model (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) were used to guide the interview guides. Demographic information collected in Phase I was also used to further guide the interviews for this study. A total of three data collection instruments were designed for this study: the online survey (Appendix A) and two semi-structured interview schedules. Two semi-structured interview schedules were designed for individual athlete interviews and the focus groups respectively. Athletes' interview guide (Appendix B) focused on athlete development, the role played by the entourage in athletes' careers, circumstances surrounding career termination and retirement transition. Entourage interview guide (Appendix C) focused on the same areas as athletes interview guide but from the entourage perspective. A sports psychology professor looked at the instruments, and revisions were made where necessary. A follow-up instrument was designed after interviews to enquire further and provide clarity where needed during focus groups.

Pilot Study

A pilot study with two retired athletes was conducted and data from the pilot was transcribed and analyzed to test the validity of the instruments. Revisions were made accordingly. Retired athletes who participated in the pilot study were not recruited to be part of the study sample.

Data Analysis

The study used an online demographic survey and interview guides to collect data. The survey sought information such as age, type of sport, time of retirement and if athletes

were ready for retirement. Demographic information and other questions in the survey were used to provide additional to the researcher as well as focus interviews. Descriptive statistics such as mean averages and frequencies were calculated for Phase I data collection.

Grounded theory was used to provide the philosophical understanding and guidance of the interview protocols. The basic tradition within the grounded theory approach involves a specific mode of analysis in which the researcher generates or “discovers” a theory from the data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). In this study, the researcher focused on the data and inductively generated abstract concepts to create a theory on elite athletes’ experiences and their entourage members. To accomplish the objective of creating a theory, Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013) depict that the researcher needs to be flexible and open to criticism whilst portraying appropriateness and authenticity throughout the research process. Following data collection, all recordings were transcribed which is an obvious first step in grounded theory data analysis process. For reliability and data quality, the researcher adopted a blind coding approach. The researcher and an independent academic with experience in qualitative research independently listened to all recordings of the interviews and read the transcripts several times. The blind method is part of a scientific method used as a quality control measure to prevent research outcomes from being influenced by outcomes from either the placebo effect or the observer bias (Creswell, 2012).

Reading and listening to all audio recordings accords readers the opportunity to judge whether the phenomenon of interest has been illuminated from a particular perspective. Consistent with ground theory data analysis (Sparkes & Smith, 2014), transcribing data was followed by an intense line-by-line manual open coding using the participant’s own words by the researcher and his independent colleague. During the open coding process, researchers consistently engaged in a comparison method. The concept of open coding and constant comparison is described as finding key phrases or words in documents and experimenting with meanings (Miles et al., 2013). This process accorded researchers the opportunity to ask specific questions such as ‘who interacted with elite athletes in their athletic careers?’ ‘Under what circumstances did they interact with athletes?, ‘how did retired elite athletes and entourage members experience the interaction?, and “when did that interaction take place in athletes careers?’. Consistent with the (Sparkes & Smith, 2014), the researcher remained open minded throughout the data analysis process.

Open coding was followed by axial coding , where the researcher created subcategories and related them to main categories and specified properties and dimensions of a category (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The last stage of data analysis was selective coding. The researcher linked all categories and sub-categories to the core category in order to create a story of theoretical propositions.

RESULTS

This chapter presents results from the data analysis of the study. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of each participant and the chapter concludes with a detailed explanation of the main concept discovered and subcategories. Pseudonym names have been assigned to all athletes and their entourages to protect the participants in this study. The primary objective of this study was to establish southern Africa elite athletes career path. The study traced athletes' experiences from initial involvement with sport to their retirement from competitive sport. The second objective was to provide an in-depth account of the role of entourage members in post-sport career transition and lastly to examine athletes' psychological impacts of retirement transition from competitive sport and technics used for post-sport career adaptation.

Research Participants brief profiles (Athletes)

Mod started gymnastics at the age of 8. He then went on to represent (country name) at the world championships, commonwealth games and world university games. His coach, parents and extended family members provided him with the social support he needed. Mod quit college to focus on gymnastics and eventually retired at the age of 22. He was married and self-employed during the data collection of this study.

Thato competed in the flyweight Boxing category at the 2004 Summer Olympic games. He started boxing at senior secondary school after playing other sports that include volleyball, track, and tennis. Thato had a brother who was also a boxer and a great inspiration to him. He won a silver medal at the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth games. Thato is currently a teacher and he is actively involved in sport development in (country name). Teachers and his teammates provided support at the beginning of his career. His job and family played a crucial role in his retirement transition. Thato had a smooth transition because he had a job during his retirement transition

Ellis started boxing by accident at the age of 16. He joined a workout group with the motive to manage his weight and ended up competing at the 2004 Athens Summer Olympic games. Before joining boxing, the 35 year old played Badminton. The 35-year-old former (country name) Olympic boxer got support from his club, teammates and family during his athletic career. Ellis mentioned consistently in the interview that teachers were crucial his development in the boxing career.

Trice represented (country name) at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and other major world championships such as IAAF world championships, commonwealth games and world university games in 100 and 200m. He started participating in his sport at the age of 10. His coach/teacher and his parents provided him with support at the beginning of his career. The federation provided him with financial support during his elite career in sport. Trice retired at the age of 28 to focus on his teaching job as well as spend time with his family.

Daniel is a 2000 Summer Sydney Olympic games finalist in 800m. The 36 year old former middle distance runner was recruited by a teacher whom they have had a father-son relationship with since then. His former teacher becomes a crucial mentor both in sport and outside sport. Daniel had to go back to school after retirement and is currently a teacher and lives with his wife. His wife played a crucial role in his elite career as well as during retirement transition. One of the factors that played a pivotal role in Daniel's transition was studying after competitive sport.

Joe is a retired long distance runner who represented (country name) at the 2004 Athens Olympic games. One of his major achievements includes being ranked fourth in world cross-country rankings. Joe started his athletic career as a high school student competing for his school. A university official who spotted him competing in track races at the age of 18 recruited him to train under his guidance. Even though his family was not forthcoming at the beginning, Joe's family played a crucial role in his elite and retirement transition. Entourage members who were profound in Joe's athletic career include the university official who recruited him, teachers and wife. The university official did not only train Joe, he provided him with meals, training shoes and other needs that Joe had before he had a job. During Joe's elite career and retirement transition, his wife played a crucial role providing him with social support.

Mmoloki is a retired (country name) sprinter and Olympian who started track at 19 years of age in senior secondary school. One of his major achievements includes competing at the 2004 Athens Summer Olympic games, winning a silver medal at the 2006 Moscow world in-door games and a gold medal at the 2007 All Africa games. The 34 year old had a career ending injury a few months before the Beijing 2008 Olympic games. His peers, teachers and siblings provided support during his career in sport. His retirement transition was not planned hence lack of employment. His belief in God provided solace during his retirement transition.

Bill is a retired (country name) sprinter who competed at the 2004 Athens Olympic games and made the final in 100m at the 2008 Beijing Olympic games. He also represented (country name) at several world championships. When Bill was six, he started playing different sports because it was required at his school. He specialized in athletics when he got to high school and college. He went to college in the United States where he competed at several championships. People and organizations that played a crucial role in his athletic career include his parents, coach and the federation. Even though Bill had a career ending injury, he was ready for retirement. He had planned for retirement by going to graduate school and starting a real-estate business. Some of his worries during retirement transition included the uncertainty of whether he had fully planned for his retirement from elite sport or not. Bill's spouse played a crucial role in providing him with social support during retirement transition.

Nick is a retired triathlete who represented (country name) at the 2008 and 2012 Olympic games. His parents taught him how to swim at the age of six. Nick was also competing in

school cross-country races around the same age. His friend invited him to a swimming meet and he brought his bike with him, to put the running, swimming and bike together. At the age of 18, Nick specialized in triathlon and never looked back. Nick's parents and his siblings played a crucial role in his athlete development by providing financial and social support that Nick needed throughout his athletic career. Other entourage members who played a crucial role in his athletic career include the federation and his wife. Nick's wife was instrumental in providing social support during his retirement transition.

Anne represented (country name) at the 2008 Beijing Olympic games in rowing singles. She retired after the Olympics games. Major highlights in her athletic career include placing fifth place at the world junior championships. Anne credits her parents in supporting her athletic career from as early as six years old when she started participating in rowing. Entourage members who played a supporting role in her athletic career include friends, teachers, coach, siblings, extended family and the federation.

David is a 30-year-old (country name) retired middle distance runner. He won a silver medal in 800m at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic games, 1998 Commonwealth games, and the 1999 Seville world championships. Even though his parents provided social support, they were not fully involved in his athletic career. People who played a crucial role in David's career in sport include his senior secondary school teacher/ coach and his coach at elite stage. David was recruited at the age of 15 to compete for his senior secondary school and joined professional sport after his senior secondary school. He retired from elite sport at the age of 29 and he is currently employed.

Brad is a 31 year-old retired (country name) track cyclist. He represented (country name) at the 2012 London Olympics. He retired after the Olympics games.

Helder is a retired (country name) rower and Olympic medalist. Helder won a bronze medal at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens in the coxless pair with his partner Titus. He started rowing at the age of seven and his parents and teachers were crucial at the beginning of his athletic career and his coaches were more profound at the elite stage of his career in rowing. Helder graduated from the university when he was at the peak of his career in sport.

Missy is a 32-year-old retired field hockey player. She was a member of the (country name) squad that represented (country name) at the 2004 Athens summer Olympics, 2005 Virginia Beach championships, 2006 Madrid world cup and 2007 Vienna world cup. Even though Missy had support from her coaches and teachers, she considers her parents to have been behind her success in field hockey throughout her career.

Julie is a 38-year-old retired former (country name) field hockey player. Julie started playing field hockey at the age of 12 at her primary school and went on to represent South Africa at various international competitions including the 2000 Sydney Olympic games. She also represented (country name) at the Commonwealth games and the world cup. Even though field hockey was introduced to Julie through school, her parents played a

crucial role in supporting her socially and financially until her retirement at the age of 29. She graduated from university while competing at the peak of her career in sport. Julie is currently employed full-time and living outside (country name).

Jocy is a 39-year-old retired (country name) swimmer. Her parents taught her how to swim at the age of six. Her parents then supported her financially and socially to the point she retired at the age of 22. She voluntarily retired to focus in her job and start a family.

Thabo is a former (country name) Olympic swimmer who competed at the Beijing 2008 Olympic games. She started swimming at the age of 10 and retired two years after the Beijing Olympic games. Before she specialized in swimming at the age of 14, she took part in other sports including track. Thabo was introduced to swimming by her parents and started competing in primary school swimming galas to the point of winning a national championship and competing at world swimming championships and the Olympics. People who were most profound in her athletic career included her family, coach, peers and husband.

Themes observed

The study observed three major and four minor themes from interviews and focus groups with retired athletes and their entourages. Athletes and entourage members consistently made statements that were consistent with the three major themes observed in elite athletes career path, namely *developmental stages, dual-career and challenges in elite sport*. The researcher also derived these two major themes from the words that athletes used to make reference to their career in sport. Sub-themes observed under the first major developmental stages were *start, junior, senior, and retirement*. The second major theme observed in the study was *dual-career*. Athletes and their entourages shared with the researcher during the interview process that finding the balance between school and sport was primary in preparing for a post-sport career transition and adaptation. Sub-themes observed under the major theme dual-career were *graduating from university, full-time job during one's career in sport and part-time job during one's career in sport*. The last major theme observed in the study was *challenges*. It was clear from retired athletes and their entourages during the interview process that athletes faced challenges ranging from lack of financial resources to maintaining an elite sport career. Sub-themes themes observed under the major theme of challenges were *financial resources, trained personnel, lack of facilities, and lack trained medical personnel*.

Minor themes observed in the study-included patriotism, entitlement, federation politics and race related politics. Athletes shared with the researcher that, even though they were not fairly compensated for representing their countries, it brought a sense of patriotism and love for their countries. Athletes used words such as “ambassador” to refer to representing their countries at international competitions. Athletes and entourage members shared the theme of politics in the federation. Participants consistently mentioned that federation officials were insecure that athletes would take the officials' positions upon the athletes' retirement from competitive sport. The theme of race and politics came up only

in South African athletes. Three retired athletes shared with the researcher that they were unfairly judged because they were black. Athletes also shared that they had to work harder to impress their white coaches in order to be in the team.

Major Themes

Major theme #1 Developmental stages

Elite athletes in Southern Africa go through a four-stage career path from their initial involvement in sport to retirement (*Start, junior, senior, and retirement*). It is important to note that even though stages are developmental, it does not suggest that athlete's career is linear. Athletes interacted with a wide variety of institutions in their career path across the four main stages. The most profound institutions that played a crucial role in athletes' careers in sport included family, schools, local and international federations. Institutional degree of involvement and specific entourage members within each institution varied across stages. For example: school and family involvement were more profound at the beginning (start and junior stage) of athletes' careers, and federations were more profound in later stages (senior). Athletes' experience and interactions with different individual entourage members (e.g., family: parents and spouses, School: teachers, federation: coaches and federation officials) were tied to specific institutions and specific stage (e.g., start: teachers and parents, and senior: coaches and sponsors). Athletes' entourages played different roles at different stages in athletes' careers. Presented in Table 1 are elite athletes' entourage profiles from start to retirement in their career in sport.

Table 1 Athletes entourage profiles

Age	10.5	15	20	31
	<i>Start</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>Senior</i>	<i>Retirement</i>
	Teacher	Coach	Coach	Family
	Parents	Teacher	Federation	Coach
	Siblings	Parents	Parents	Federation
	Ext family	Federation	Friends	Friends

Sub-themes

Sub-theme #1-Athletic career starting stage

Data analysis from interviews and focus groups with retired athletes and their entourages showed that most athletes across the four countries started their career in sport at their respective schools. The starting age ($M=11$) is consistent with being in primary school at

the age of eleven. Table 2 presents athletes' average starting age distribution by country. Zimbabwean athletes have the youngest starting average age of 9 and South Africa has the highest starting age of 12. Some athletes in sports such as swimming and triathlon were introduced to sport by their parents.

Table 2 Starting sport average ages by country

<i>Country</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Average starting age</i>
Botswana	7	11
South Africa	4	12
Zimbabwe	4	9
Namibia	2	10

Data analysis showed that, even though parental involvement at the starting age varied across athletes in the four countries, it varied more by race than by nationality. Participants that identified as black ($n=11$) perceived lower parental involvement at the beginning of their careers in sport than athletes that identified as white ($n=6$). Teachers/coaches and their respective schools were observed to play a crucial role in athletes' development across the two races and across the four countries, particularly at the beginning of athletes' careers in sport. Sport is played across the four countries from primary school to tertiary level. Athletes who were not exposed to sport by their parents were accorded the opportunity to play sport through sport programs available in schools. Participant #3 from Botswana shared with the researcher during the interview process that he played sport because it was available at school.

Like any other kid, I took part in sports because there was sport at school. I did athletics, volleyball and tennis. What generated my interest was seeing other kids take part in sports. Teachers were always asking us to do sports since elementary school.

Participant #3 attributes his interest to sport from the availability of sport in school as well as peers and teachers from his school. When Participant #3 was asked about his parental involvement, he explained that his parents were not forthcoming in supporting his career in sport particularly at the beginning. His parents were not against his participation in sport, but they were mostly concerned about his schoolwork.

My parents didn't care much about what I did except my school. They saw sport as part of playing. They were not against it, but they were not coming forward to provide some specific support towards sports. I will chat with my father and he would say, "I hear you fight people and you are so tiny. They will kill you."

Consistent with Participant #3's experiences with lack of parental involvement at the beginning of his career in sport, Participant #10 from Zimbabwe shared similar sentiments and made generalizations in Africa, parents are more concerned about school and fear that sport may temper with progress in school.

You know in Africa, our parents normally want you to concentrate in your schoolwork first and after that you can do sport. They think that sport is playing. My parents thought that I was playing and I wasn't concentrating on my schoolwork. They were worried that maybe I was going to fail in school.

It is important to note that in both Participant #3 and Participant 10's parents consider sport as part of play not a profession that can be undertaken for a career. Parents confirmed during the interview process that their primary concern was for their kids to get the education they need from school. A federation official from Botswana affirmed that entourage involvement varies, but parents are the least engaged in their kids' sport.

That's absolutely right, the level of engagement varies from the involvement of teachers, spouses to parents. I easily agree with them because their parents are the least engaged. Here in the (Federation name), we would like to see a change in that for greater parent involvement because in our view the greater parental involvement the better the athlete does.

This finding is consistent across of variety of studies that have been carried out in Africa. A detailed discussion of this finding is available in the discussion chapter. In cases where parents were not forth coming in supporting their kids at the beginning of their careers, teachers played a crucial role in supporting athletes by providing them with resources to play sport even outside school. Participant # 3 from Botswana explained to the researcher that his teacher/coach supported him financially at the beginning of his career in sport. He shared with the researcher that his teacher/coach bought him his first ticket to Europe to compete in professional sport. The relationship that Participant # 5 had with his teacher/coach properly fits the description of a parent-child relationship, even though they are not biologically related. Teachers in several schools played a parental role once they identified a talented athlete with the potential to succeed in professional sport. Participant # 5's teacher/coach provided him with sport gear, running shoes and supplements as well as transport to competitions even those outside the school calendar.

He bought me shoes. If you remember very well, I use to run barefooted. He introduced me to spikes, bought me trainers and supplements. There is nobody who can do that for you. He also drove me to competitions.

Athletes ($n=6$) who perceived a high parental involvement also acknowledged the role played by schools in giving everyone in schools access to playing a variety sports. Participant # 11, an athlete from Zimbabwe who was introduced to swimming buy his parents and had a lot of support from his parents explained to the researcher that the

Zimbabwean school system accorded him and others the opportunity to play a variety of sports before specializing in his sport of choice.

Growing up in Zimbabwe school system, you go through a lot of sports. Some afternoons in winter you have to play rugby and hockey, which I did. I was also a competitive swimmer. I was a captain in both junior and senior school. I did cross-country running in junior school and I loved it. Even in senior school up until my third year in senior school I still played rugby and hockey. I stopped rugby and hockey because I was focusing more on triathlon (sport).

Playing a variety of sports before specialization provides youth athletes with a wide base of skills before they specialize in the sport of their choice. The Zimbabwean school system provided Participant # 11 and other young students an environment to learn various sport skills. Participation in multisport and specialization will be discussed in more detail in the discussion chapter. Data analysis showed that athletes with high parental involvement also had the autonomy to make decisions about their sport without pressure from their parents. Participant # 16 from Namibia shared with the researcher that her parents gave her the freedom to make decisions on her practice sessions. Her parents did not force her to attend practice sessions if she didn't want to attend.

They were always there, but there wasn't pressure from their side for me to do anything I did not like or didn't enjoy. It was more of a supporting structure than anything else. If I didn't want to go to the training session they said, "then don't go, stay at home". But I went anyways. They respected decisions of what I wanted to do. When we had training camps they made arrangements that we could be there. They were more in the background more than anything else, but for me it was an absolute foundation.

Consistent with Participant #16 comments, Participant #2 from Botswana indicated that her parents introduced her to swimming and went further to share that her parents enrolled her to a club, which is inconsistent with athletes who did not have parental involvement. Participant #2 also acknowledged that the school organized competitions that accorded her the opportunity to compete with other students.

My family, I was taught swimming as a life skill at that age. At that age we did a few little competitions at school. It came around then that I actually had talent because I was winning races. At about ten years old my parents took me to a club and that's when it started. Basically it was my parents and coach that really got me involved and I was talented and I shouldn't throw it away.

Participant # 11 from Zimbabwe also shared with the researcher the role-played by his parents creates a family environment that accorded him and his brother to play a variety of sports.

It was definitely my parents. I was very fortunate to have my family. I have 2 brothers, my older brother played cricket, I did swimming and rugby, and my younger brother also did swimming and water polo. My parents were very passionate in making sport a part of our lives. So they did give us the means to do that. So growing up in Zimbabwe, it was definitely my parents who gave us the opportunity to do that, right from the start.

Elite athletes from the four countries shared with the researcher that even though some parents trivialize participation in sport, schools accorded them the opportunity to play a variety of sports. Moments that marked the beginning of athletes' careers in sport were expressed in relation to the role of the family and schools. In some cases, athletes were specific in making reference to the role teachers played outside the school calendar. The role of parents varied by race, athletes who identified as black were observed to start their sport at school but white athletes started sport at a club that their parents registered them to. Athletes who had lower parental support relied heavily on support from their schools.

Sub-theme #2 and 3-Junior and senior stage in the athletic career path

Data analysis indicated that even though athletes distinctively made reference to experiences as junior athletes, athletes shared transitional experiences of moving from junior to senior athlete. The word "junior and or senior" was used by athletes to distinguishing between two stages or show that they had moved to a higher stage from the previous one. Athletes talked about joining the junior or senior team. Athletes had to be invited or qualify in order to make it to the next stage in their athletic career. Athletes also used age to indicate a specific stage that is measured by age. For example, being invited to join the under 21 team. Participant # 15 from South Africa made reference to the junior stage using age, which coincided with tertiary school.

In my first year of varsity, I made the U21 South Africa team that went to the World Cup in Argentina.

In the previous stage (starting), it was clear that athletes got support from schools and their parents. It should be noted that on average, the junior stage coincides with junior and senior secondary school while senior level coincides with tertiary or vocational school in athletes outside sport academic transition. During athletes' transition from junior to a senior level, athletes simultaneously make transitions outside sports, which impacts their sport transition. Athletes' simultaneously transition to a tertiary school, which may require more time and commitment to succeed. In other cases, athletes had to move to a different town to attend university or move back to the village after secondary school because they were in that town specifically for secondary school. Athletes who moved back to their village or town would not have qualified to go to tertiary school. Athletes who did not make it to tertiary school lost the school support system and had to seek for support from federations or seek other means of support. Athletes shared with the researcher statements that were consistent with within career transition. In this case, athletes had to find new coaches in their new town or village. Participant # 10, a participant from Zimbabwe did

not have much support from his parents. Participant # 10 shared experiences of his transitional challenges with the researcher during the interview process.

When I was in secondary school, the school transported me throughout the country. Then after that it became sort of difficult for me to switch from high school general level to a senior category. It was a problem; it took me almost three to four years for me to do well at the senior category. I think what made it more difficult was that after high school, I was unemployed and moved to the village. There were no sporting facilities and I lost (name of the coach) who was my coach. During that period, it was very difficult to get another person to support me.

Joe's transitional challenges are consistent with transitional challenges in the literature except that he had lost his coach/teacher that provided and treated him like his son. Like other athletes who had support from their coaches, Joe lost his support when he moved. It took Joe at least three to four years to make it in the senior category. One of the factors that contributed significantly to Joe's bounce back was that he was offered a full-time job in the city where he had access to sport facilities and reunited with his coach. In a similar case, Joe from Botswana experienced similar transitional challenges. He did not qualify to go to the university after secondary school but the federation supported him to train and compete abroad. In Joe's case, the researcher observed a sense of transfer of support from the school to the federation. Even though Joe's coach/teacher purchased Joe's first flight ticket to Europe, the federation paid for his subsequent travels and meals while competing in Europe before he could live independent of federation finances.

The federation started fully supporting me after finishing school (senior secondary school). When I finished form five (high school), I flew straight to Europe and turned professional. The federation would pay for my flights and get me a hotel in Gaborone near the stadium.

It was clear during the data analyses process that athletes in college had to find balance between school and sport. In some cases, athletes made a conscious decision with their parents to quit university in order to train for the Olympics but in other cases, athletes dropped from university. Participant #2, an Olympian from Botswana had moved to study overseas when she learnt that she had qualified for the Olympic games and decided to focus on training for the Olympic games instead of starting her university studies. Participant #2 explained to the researcher the decision she made.

I actually had moved to the UK. My (extended family member) live there and I moved there with them to go study. I registered to study psychology, but about four months before I started I got a call that I had qualified for the Olympics. I had to talk to my parents and they told me that it was entirely up to me but if it were them, they would definitely go to the Olympics and not give up an opportunity like that. That's where I am today.

Upon Participant #2's retirement from competitive sport, she completed a swimming-coaching course in the United States paid for by her parents. Table 3 shows athletes highest academic qualification during data collection by country.

Table 3 Athletes highest academic qualification

<i>Country</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Athletes highest academic qualification</i>		
		<i>Senior secondary school</i>	<i>University degree</i>	<i>Graduate degree</i>
Botswana	7	4	3	0
Zimbabwe	4	1	2	1
South Africa	4	2	1	1
Namibia	2	0	2	0

In a similar case, Participant # 15 from South Africa dropped from the University after six years. The quote below is Participant # 15's response from the researcher when she was asked about her experience when she was at the university while competing in elite sport.

Ooh f*** well, we are all growing and learning how to make sports more professional. I was there for six years and I didn't qualify or I still don't have a degree. I will never blame anyone because I was an adult and I made my decisions, hockey was my thing, my number one thing and its difficult to play for the national team and get a degree. I would miss lectures because of training. It came a time where it was almost pointless for me to be in a lecture because I would go in to the Gym in the morning from six to seven, then go to lectures before lunch-time. I would then go for a 30 to 40 minute run. Now I am tired. I go to lectures in the afternoon, then in the evening I have a skill session and that's my day. "You are in class, and its just showing up. Your mind is everywhere and you are literally napping in your mind".

Participant # 15 also made suggestion on the best possible way to help students who compete internationally for their countries to cope with balancing school and sport.

They should say you are here to do hockey, your degree takes three years but from history, you will take five or six years. No way I would juggle that, its almost impossible. Maybe just take half of each semester load then you can cope. No one tells you that when you apply for varsity and when they give you a full scholarship. No one tells you that it's going to be difficult and they help you where they can like missing class and you can't substitute that. You can't substitute for time in class.

Athletes also shared that successfully graduating from high school and college was a good way to prepare for a post-sport athletic career. A more detailed discussion with examples is presented in the retirement stage. Athletes ($n=8$) who successfully completed a university degree during their elite career in sport also shared challenges they came across in finding the balance between school and sport. Participant # 11, an Olympian from Zimbabwe shared his experiences of competing internationally. He goes further to share his concerns regarding support from his university in balancing school and sport.

So basically growing up through senior secondary school, I was fortunate enough that I went to two world championships. With that, then university got in the way and I didn't think I would really be continuing with the sport that much. I went to (university name), which wasn't really renowned for sports such as triathlon. It was in the end of my second year at university that I really wanted to give it a go again.

Participant #6 from Botswana shared that he had a choice and did not consider balancing school and sport to be viable at the time because he was doing well in sport as early senior secondary school.

There was a choice. I could have maybe tried to focus more on academics and try to balance it with athletics. I did not consider it to be a viable option at that time. Maybe I should go back to re-write some of the subjects so that I can be admitted to a college or university.

Challenges of navigating elite sport and higher education were also shared by coaches and other entourage members. Participant #6 and Participant # 5's coach from Botswana shared with the researcher that the system or structure of sport makes it difficult for students to balance school and sport. The coach also shared that coaches and parents should encourage athletes to find balance between school and sport or else, athletes would choose sport over school.

It is very difficult to balance school and sport especially in our system here. I think it is the role of parents and coaches to encourage athletes to balance school and sport otherwise the players would drop from school and go elite.

Two athletes participants had enrolled in the university and one did not start while the other one dropped after six years in the university. What was most common in these athletes decision was that they both chose sport over their university studies. The role played by universities, coaches, and parents plays a crucial role in supporting athletes through elite sport and higher education. Participant #3, a retired Botswana boxer shared that the most challenging times of his career in sport were juggling sport and education. The athlete further shared that sport also provided an opportunity to refresh from schoolwork and come rejuvenated.

The challenge with me would be juggling sport and education. It proved to be very difficult because sometimes I would miss classes and exams. I would miss out on a lot of content and when I come back, I have to really work hard to cover up. In a way, I would benefit because I would have refreshed and study well. That was a big challenge. Sometimes I would not attend international camps because I was a doing school work. But it did not stop me from working hard to achieving results. The university and my coach were very supportive.

Some of the challenges athletes faced regardless of whether they went to college included keeping up with expectations. Participant # 8 from Zimbabwe shared with the researcher during the interview process that he had to deal with expectations of keeping a consistent success in his athletic career in college.

It's hard because I came in as a freshman and I was a 21.1 guy. I remember my first meet outdoors I ran like 21 flat and the guys were like "oh man that's quick" but at that point I was just running, I was having fun. Then I went to my conference meet. I ran 10:19 and 20:15 and again I was just running. But all of a sudden now people start talking like "oh my gosh you ran this, you ran that" now you start paying attention to everything else and you realize how fast you are. Then my sophomore year all of a sudden I'm trying to run 20.5 and its not coming. It's not coming because I'm putting pressure on myself because of the expectations and all that.

Elite athletes used age and the type of competitions to make reference to junior and senior stages respected. It was clear during the interview that athletes faced challenges in juggling school and sport.

Sub-theme# 4 Retirement

The last stage observed in athletes' career in elite sport is retirement. The researcher observed in the three phases of data collection data there were differences in retirement transition. A small number of athletes ($n=7$) indicated in Phase I of data collection that they did not plan for retirement and they were not ready when they retired. A detailed presentation of athletes' preparation for retirement is presented in table 4.

Table 4 Athletes retirement planning by country

Country	N	Think of retirement at senior stage	Planned for Retirement	Ready for retirement
Botswana	7	2	1	2
Zimbabwe	4	2	3	2
South Africa	4	0	1	0
Namibia	2	2	2	2

Athletes who were not ready for retirement provided reasons during the interviews and focus groups that they retired due to injury, being cut from the team, or not qualifying for the games. Data analysis indicated that athletes who were not ready for retirement involuntarily retired from competitive sport. These athletes also made an attempt to return to compete but eventually retired. Athletes who retired involuntarily shared that they had a sense of vulnerability because they could not control what would happen next. Participant #6 from Botswana shared with the researcher that he was more concerned about returning to athletics than planning retirement transition when asked about services available for athletes that retire from competitive sport.

No, when you retire they do not give you anything, even money. For me I never really fought on the side of money. I was fighting to return. I was hopeful that I will come back to athletics.

It was clear during the interview process that Participant #6 wanted to continue competing and was not ready for retirement. His retirement was due to a career ending injury. Athletes who retired involuntarily shared a sense of loss and worked hard in anticipation that they return to competing. Involuntary retirement led to psychological impacts of nervousness, panic, a sense of loss, and devastation for some athletes. Participant # 12 from South Africa shared psychological effects of not making the team after working hard to return to playing.

I was devastated. I was desperate to make the team, I was training really hard. I thought I made a good enough recovery to be at the level that I needed to be to play. But the coaches in the selection thought differently. I was in a bad place.

Even though all athletes shared sentiments of worry, disappointment and missing their sport, it was clear during the data analysis process that involuntary retirees without a job or university education were more concerned about source of income to support their families. Consistent with Participant #6 (athlete from Botswana), there were no services available for athletes that retire from competitive sport. Participant # 10 from Zimbabwe explained to the researcher that unavailability of retirement transition services was a problem in Zimbabwe. Participant # 10 also shared with the researcher how he prepared and coped with retirement transition.

That's a big problem in Zimbabwe. Most athletes don't prepare for life after sport. A lot of them are unemployed and struggle with their lives despite the fact that they did very well in sport. For me, I can say I was fortunate because I prepared myself for life after sport. I had passed my high school exam and I have a good job. During my athletic career, I took sport management courses. Most of my colleagues in sport didn't have basic education. They cannot find jobs or do sport courses because they do not have basic education. So that's the

major problem with other athletes. But for me, I don't have a problem. I'm comfortable with what I have.

Participant # 13 from South Africa shared with the researcher during the interview process that his immediate worry after retirement was supporting his family.

My immediate worry was the ability to support my two boys. When you're running you're make money and pay your bills. But when you stop, there's nothing that's coming. You're used to the lifestyle that money is coming in and out but when you retire, it's only going out. My worry was if I was able to get a good job and to be able to get back to the South African society.

Athletes who voluntarily retired from sport and those that successfully completed college shared with the researcher that they had planned and knew when they will retire. Data analysis showed that voluntary retirees used events such as major games to mark their retirement from competitive sport. For example, athletes would make a decision that they will retire after their next Olympic games. Reasons for voluntary retirement shared by athletes include lack of financial support from their countries, focus on studies, start a family, and new career. Data analysis also showed that voluntary retirees had thought of retirement when they were senior athletes. Participants# 16's from Namibia shared with the researcher that even though she retired after the 1996 Atlanta Olympic games, she had been planning and thinking of her retirement.

I had made up my mind even long before the Olympics. I knew I couldn't combine both my studies and my sport to the extent that I would want to. I was happy about my decision and looking back I still am happy about my decision.

It was clear in the data analysis that voluntary retirees were switching from competitive sport to join a new career. Similar to participants # 16's comments, other athletes retired from competition to a new job. These athletes used words such as "smooth", "automatic" or "transfer" to refer to the ending of their competitive sport. Participant #3 from Botswana voluntarily retired to start a career in teaching.

I must say that mine was actually automatic transition because I was a student when I was boxing. That meant that when I finished schooling, I started working. I was concentrating on my teaching career. Being a retired athlete did not frustrate me because sport was not paying us much. We were not benefiting financially so retirement did not strain me in any way and I didn't need to prepare anything special for retirement.

Participant #3 makes reference to the fact that he did not have financial benefit financially from Boxing and as a result, he did not feel any financial loss from quitting competitive boxing. Nonrevenue sports such as boxing and hockey did not earn athletes significant amounts of money except in cases where the team had a sponsor or they were exceptionally talented to have a sponsor on their own.

Factors that facilitate retirement transition

The study observed that having university education, full-time or part-time job, engaging in multiple activities, and having good social support having from a spouse or family facilitated retirement transition. Consistent with athletes' experiences, family entourage members, such as parents and spouses, also shared with the researcher that they played a crucial role in supporting athletes during retirement transition. It was evident in the data analysis that close entourages such as parents, siblings, and spouses availed themselves to spend time with athletes in retirement transition. Entourages and athlete participants shared with the researcher during the interview process that having multiple roles (life partner) and activities (continued active life style) and spending time with family kept athletes engaged in something meaningful. Spouses of retired athletes shared with the researcher that retirement from an elite sport was an opportunity for their life partners to focus their energy on their relationship. A participant's spouse shared her role with the researcher.

Obviously it's been quite a change but I think it helps if you're proactive with other activities. For example, now we can go to the gym and it's not this athlete who runs 3 minutes a K and his wife who is running 5 and half minutes a K. Now we can do things together you can stay active in a different way. For example, (name) and I do a lot off road and obstacle courses so we race together almost every weekend. He may do 18 K and ill do the 12 K but we go together and we do different things so we are still keeping active. So I think instead of putting all that energy into himself and his progress we now put that energy into us and our progress together. So I think that helps, we put a diary together of things to keep us active which is fantastic and that's been key to the transition.

Participant # 11 from Zimbabwe shared with the researcher that even though there are no retirement transition services, he felt recognized and appreciated by his federation when they staged a send off ceremony in for his retirement.

There isn't really any support for anyone who retires, but the (federation name) really went out of their way to give me a really good send off in my final international race. They awarded me with a gift of an awards function in my name. So they gave me a really great emotional thanks and an emotional send off. I also had a full time job that I could get into. I was working part

time for (Company name) and it was a stepping-stone into something else. My fiancée and I already had a wedding planned for December. It was all these factors.

Table 5 presents the number of athletes that were married, single and those that were divorced during data collection. Only six athletes were single and one divorced.

Table 5 presents athletes marriage statues by country

Country	N	Married	Divorced/separated	Single
Botswana	7	5	0	2
South Africa	4	1	1	2
Zimbabwe	4	3	0	1
Namibia	2	1	0	1

Data analysis showed that athletes went through four main stages (namely; start, junior, senior and retirement) in their career in sport. Different members of the entourage played different roles at different stages. Parents and teacher play a crucial role in supporting athletes at the beginning of their careers while the federations and the coach were observed to play a profound role at senior stage. Voluntary retirement was associated with a smooth transition while involuntary retirement was associated with challenges and panic. Table 6 presents the four main stages and some of the raw statements shared by athletes identified across different stages.

Table 6 Summary of athlete stages and raw data

Athlete Phases	<i>M</i> <i>age</i>	Raw data
<i>Start</i>	11	
School		I took part in sports because there was sport at school
School		My parents gave us the opportunity to play sport right from the start.
<i>Junior</i>	14	Sport is a general requirement in Zimbabwean school
Parents		My parents were supporting me because I was also getting an education
Coach/Teacher		In terms of support, my high school coaches were the ones that used to push me.
<i>Senior</i>	18	
Federation		They provided the vehicle with which to develop
Coach		They provided a good relationship with international sporting bodies
		Had a passionate athletics and swimming coach
		I got support especially from my coach
<i>Retirement</i>	33	
Family		I had my family and my wife
		Probably my fiancée because she encouraged me a lot but sometimes she would just say, “ go ahead and get a job and start working”.
Federation		They gave me a really great send off and felt being appreciated; it made me feel great about the transition and the position I was taking.

Major theme #2 Dual Career

The researcher learned that even though a variety of factors facilitated retirement transition, education, part time or full time job, engaging in other activities played a crucial role in facilitating retirement transition. Completing secondary school accorded athletes the opportunity to further their studies during and in post-sport career. Completing university education did not only accord athletes the opportunity to further their studies but also to seek employment in a variety of disciplines such as teaching, finance and marketing depending on their university degrees. Athletes who were employed part-time or full time were only observed in South Africa and Zimbabwe (Zimbabwean athlete based in South Africa). Athletes who had part-time jobs suggested that it was a great way to learn skills that were useful in their post-sport career and also to give them an opportunity to be employed full time upon retirement. Athletes did not only share the benefits of dual career but they were also visible in athletes that had jobs and or completed higher education. These athletes were quick to mention to the researcher that they were teachers and or work in the marketing field in their post-sport career. Participant # 12 from South Africa shared with the researcher how her she athlete

I had a job, which was kind of in the marketing field. The company I

worked for understood my needs as an elite athlete. They hired me full-time and also gave me extra time off to train in the morning and at night, which did not affect my leave time. I was paid most of the time at competitions.

As presented in Table 3, at least eight athletes successfully completed a university degree while competing in elite sport at the same time. Even though the study did not look into the type of jobs and athletes income, all retired athletes were employed during the data collection of the project. Competing at the elite level and doing part-time jobs accorded athletes unique skills and experiences that they used in their post-sport career. In South Africa and Zimbabwe, some athletes' had an arrangement of part-time work with their sponsors. These athletes were able to use such skills efficiently and their social network as resources for a post-sport career. Athlete's employer/sponsor from Zimbabwe shared with the researcher that they discussed what was best for the athlete when he retired from competitive sport.

So (name) had been working for us part time since 2009. We also supported him financially in terms of some of the events he needed to go to last year over the salary we gave him. So when he was coming up to his retirement, we sat down and he said "look I'm retiring" and we had a very open dialogue on what his career aspirations were. I think there was a lot of support just like when anyone is coming to work for you full time and the career conversations and so on. Yea, it was very involved between us.

The sponsor/employer's company was based in South Africa but sponsored a Zimbabwean athlete based in South Africa. Athletes that worked part-time in their elite sport mentioned to the researcher that the skills learnt were useful in their post-sport career and it was not challenging to get such part-time jobs in sport industry companies. Participant # 12 shared her experience of working part-time while she was an elite athlete.

I guess sport people like to work with other sport people. They know the dedication and commitment that it takes to be an elite athlete and they can relate that back to their work at their job. In marketing my field is relatable to sport and some people like to hire those that know what it takes to be an athlete and relate that to their job.

It was clear during the interview with Participant # 12 that she learned to transfer her sport-learnt skills such as commitment and determination to her part-time job in marketing. The ability for athletes to transfer sport-learnt skills is crucial to particularly for post-sport adaptation. Athletes who are able to transfer their skills are more likely to adapt to their post-sport career faster and be able to use sport-learnt skills such as teamwork, resiliency, and positive thinking which are taught in sports.

Major theme #3 Challenges

Athletes experienced a variety of challenges in their careers in sport. The most profound challenges that athletes faced include; lack financial resources to compete an elite level, lack of training facilities in their respective countries, lack of trained coaches, and lack of trained medical personnel. Athletes experienced most of these challenges in their senior stage to retirement transition. Athletes and their entourage members explained to the researcher that in some cases, they did not have access to information or getting information late. A spouse of an athlete from Zimbabwe summarized some of the challenges that her husband and other elite athletes in developing athletes face.

I think when you come form an underdeveloped country you have a lot of other challenges that come your way and I think, never mind financially, its logistically, its lack of internet, its not being able to communicate, its hearing about things at the last minute.

Data analysis showed that even though athletes from South Africa faced financial challenges, they had local sponsors to give them financial support and part-time jobs. Athletes from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe did not have local sponsors hence relied primarily on their government and international sponsors. Some athletes chose to retire after competing in the Olympics games because they could not continue supporting themselves to compete at an elite level. Lack of financial support to train at elite levels and also to address injuries that athletes face led to athletes retiring early from sport. Thego from Botswana shared with the researcher that even though he was ranked 8th in the world, he did not have enough support to prepare for international competitions and decided to retire and focus on developing young athletes.

I felt I was not getting enough support to achieve what I wanted to do. I was one of great boxers in Botswana, ranked 8 in the world. I needed more international exposure. For example; to take part in competition such as the Olympics and the World Cup, you have to go for a few months to prepare for the competition but in Botswana you have to go direct to that competition. I was also looking at my knowledge of boxing that if I retire, I can assist our senior national team in any way.

Tshego is one of the athletes from Botswana who successfully completed university studies and voluntarily retired from competitive sport. It was clear during the interview that if Tshego had financial resources to continue, he could have continued with the sport. During the data collection of the project, Tshego worked with boxing development teams at junior and senior level. Participant # 2 from Botswana shared that she did not enjoy it anymore because of lack of support to continue with the sport.

I got to a point where I wasn't enjoying it. Like I told you I wasn't getting any financial support from anyone but my parents. I had enough of that and I wanted to start giving back to them. I was an adult now and they had to continue to pay for my studies, and coaching. It just didn't feel like it was fair. So a lot of my decision was based on no funding.

Participant # 11 from Zimbabwe also affirmed that financial challenges were profound in his elite career in Sport. To address financial challenges, Participant # 11 explained to the researcher that he raised money to support his 2012 Olympic games qualification tour.

The last 2 or 3 months trying to qualify for London were really hard for me from all points. I was always trying to fight always trying to raise money to get to races. I got it but I had to fight really hard to get it and it took a lot of energy.

Lack of training equipment and other resources posed a lot of challenges for athletes from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Participant # 16's coach from Namibia explained to the researcher that they have a 25m-heated pool. However, when participants# 16 was an elite athlete, they did not have a heated pool for swimming in winter. In order to train in winter, they focused on endurance, weight lifting, and some mental exercises. The coach also shared with the researcher that in some cases, they used wood burning stove to heat their swimming pool.

We did a more all rounded training with a lot of endurance training, and weight lifting. To avoid being bored in the longer sense, I would give them quizzes or riddles to solve. Sometimes we would heat a pool with word-burning stove, what we call a donkey.

Financial challenges during retirement transition were most evident in athletes who did not have college education and or source of income. Upon retirement, athletes realized that they needed another source of income because they heavily relied of appearance fees and allowances form competing internationally for their countries. Athletes used words such as “facing life” to refer to their transition from competitive sport. Such circumstances brought a sense worry, panic and nervousness. The immediate worry that athletes had was supporting their families financially. In some cases, athletes had to live with friends or family members because they did not have a place to live since they had lived abroad in their career in sport. Participant #6 from Botswana retired after a career ending injury. He shared his experiences with the researcher after retirement.

At that point when you retire, there are things that you face in life. You get challenges. You need to have a source of financial support. So what happened with me was that, I was just about to break through into making money. I can't say I was making enough to rely on. What I could do next was either look for a job or do some courses.

In addition to lack of financial resources, athletes felt isolated. Participant # 5 expressed a sense of isolation after his retirement from competitive sport.

If you get injured today or you retire without anything nobody will even think of you or where you are. We will meet you at the bus rank looking very old, tired and without anything. I had a similar situation but I was lucky to go to school just before it happened to me.

Returning to school and finding alternative sources of income are some of the strategies they used to cope with financial challenges during their retirement transition. Athletes also joined federations, became coaches, did public speaking (only in South Africa) and engaged in other sport related activities for income and to remain within sports circles.

Minor themes

In addition to major themes observed in the study, the study also observed patriotism, entitlement, federation politics and race related politics (South Africa) as minor themes. Data analysis indicated that athletes exemplified patriotism and expressed love for their countries in many ways. During the interview process, athletes talked passionately about their countries and what should be done to improve sport in their respective countries. They consistently suggested that their countries should emulate industrialized countries and also implement the long-term athlete development model. The researcher learnt that athletes felt entitlement to be supported because they represented their countries abroad. They used the word “ambassador” and “service” in reference to representing their countries abroad. Participant # 5 from Botswana suggested that the government should have a plan for retiring athletes.

Let me use this analogy for you. Parents of kids in pre-schools already know which primary schools they will send their kids but here it's something else. You have to represent your country and when you are done, there is nothing for you.

All the four countries studied did not have retirement transition programs or post-sport career training programs for elite athletes. Athletes could join federations and or chose to coach after their elite career. Federations also employed some athletes, particularly those who had tertiary education. In some cases, athletes and their entourages shared that federation politics impacted their participation in Sport. For example, three participants raised concerns that had problems with federation officials during their elite career in sport. Such problems included athlete choice of the coach, funding from the federations, clearance to compete internationally and qualification rules interpretation. For example, some athletes shared that federation officials did not provide enough support but expected athletes to contribute 10% of their earnings to the federation coffers. Participant # 10 shared with the researcher his experiences with his federation.

I have to be honest that there was the problem in my federation. There was friction in my federation. Some of them were power-hungry and jealous. That was the problem with my federation. They thought maybe if you became successful you take over the positions of the management of the federation, so at times we used to have some friction. At times, they wanted

about 10% of our earnings for nothing. I was sponsored by (two sponsor names), so they used to fly me to different competitions. The federation didn't give me enough support. If the federation had supported me, I would've achieved a lot. I used to miss some of the competitions because my federation failed to buy me flight tickets.

The minor theme of race was only observed in South Africa. South African black athletes shared that white coaches treated them unfairly. Athlete participants from South Africa shared that they were subjected to more scrutiny than their white teammates. For Example, Participant # 15 consistently mentioned that the quota system in South African hockey team during her time subjected her and other black players to stereotypes that they did not earn to be in the team but were brought in to meet the minimum number required by the policy. Participant # 15 shared her experience watching men field hockey with the researcher.

I have sat in the stands watching the men hockey team player in RSA and players will go on and off the field and a non-white player will make a mistake and you could hear this murmur around the stands. I know its not everybody but if the player makes the same mistake and they would be like haahaaa a “quota player”. Not ever thinking that this guy is having a bad day today. A white player would make mistakes all the time but they won't see it that way, they will say John is off today.

Interpretation and Discussion

The objective of this study was to establish elite athletes from Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe career path by tracing their experiences from initial involvement with sport to retirement from competitive sport. The study also provides an in-depth account of the role of entourage members on elite athletes' careers particularly in post-sport career preparation. Lastly, the purpose of the study was to understand athletes' preparation for retirement, psychological impacts of retirement transition and techniques used for post-sport career adaptation. The interpretation and discussion of the study is done consistently with study objectives and themes observed in the study. Major themes observed in the study are developmental stages, dual career, and challenges while minor themes observed include among others patriotism, entitlement and racial conflicts. Results of this study are discussed within Wylleman and Lavelle's (2004) lifespan model of athlete development. The primary reason for choosing this model to guide this study is that it considers transitions occurring in the athletic domain as well as those occurring in other domains of athletes' lives. In order to understanding elite athletes career path, it is crucial to take into account developmental transitions occurring outside sport such as athlete psychological, vocational/academic and psychosocial development (Wylleman et al., 2004).

The primary finding from this study is that elite athletes go through four main stages in their career from the beginning to retirement from competitive sport. These findings are consistent with literature on elite athletes career transitions (Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Debois, Ledon, Argiolas, & Rosnet, 2012; Wylleman et al., 2004), which observed that elite athletes career stages are marked by events, ages, and performance. The primary differences in the results from this study and the sport psychology literature is the type of challenges that athletes face in their careers in sport. For example, athletes in the west may face challenges of parental over-involvement (Heinzmann, 2002; O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2011) while in Southern Africa athletes may perceive lower parental involvement (Malete, 2006).

Elite athletes career stages (i.e., initiation, development, mastery and discontinuation) are discussed in the literature showing that athletes continuously advanced from one stage to another in their career in sport (Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). In this study, the researcher used participants' words to depict four main stages observed (namely; start, junior, senior and retirement). Athlete participants and their entourages used events, age and performance level during the interview process to denote a specific stage in their athletic career. Athlete also made reference to organizational/institutional roles such as the school, family and the federations to refer to a certain stage in their career in sport. The role played by different institutions varied by stage. For example, athletes related most of their early careers to the role played by schools and parents with no or minimal mention of the federation. It was clear from the data analysis that athletes were dependent on financial and social support from the school to play sport at the early stages of their careers. Even though parental

involvement varied by country, school programs had resources to accord athletes the opportunity to play a variety of sport through out the year. Horn (2008) depicts that the sport involvement of children takes place in a social context, and parents, peers, and siblings can strongly influence the psychological outcomes of this involvement. In the context of Southern Africa, even though parental involvement variety by country and sport, school sport programs provided an environment that support children participation in sport. Shehu and Akpata (2008) explained that teachers in many schools in Southern Africa volunteer and it is also part of a lot of teachers' jobs to coach, be umpires, and organize intra- and extra-mural sport events. As a result, teachers in most African countries are not only in a position to widen youth sport participation but to inspire life-long physical activity and encourage attainment of self-directed sport aspirations. Malete (2006) affirms that, given the cultural context and perception in Botswana. It is therefore likely that young athletes may perceive lower parental support than their counterparts from industrialized nations.

Athletes used age, and level of performance to indicate progression from just playing for their schools to a national junior and or senior nation team. For example, athletes consistently mentioned qualifying for the "under 21" world junior championships or joining the senior national team and the role-played by the federation to give them access to international competitions such as the Olympics. At elite stage, participants also shared with the researcher that they started earning income that showed that they had advanced to a stage of independence. Transition from junior to senior stage and experiences within each stage posed within-career transitions that athletes coped with not only to remain in the stage but also to advance to a higher stage (i.e., be an Olympian). Stambulova (2000) depicts that within-career transitions can be normative (expected), or non-normative (unexpected). Research in sport and other careers (Cabello Bonilla, 2012; Kosugi, 2012) demonstrated that within career transition are common among young athletes as well as young employees that just joined their professional field.

Normative and non-normative transitions observed in the study were consistent with studies that have looked at within-career transition (Lorenzo, Borrás, Sánchez, Jiménez, & Sampedro, 2009; Stambulova, Franck, & Weibull, 2012; Wylleman et al., 2004). Normative transitions were determined by age (e.g., qualifying for "U21-team") and in contrast, non-normative transitions were unpredictable experiences (e.g., injury and de-selection) that athletes coped with in their athletic career. These unpredictable experiences were most profound in transitions between junior and senior level and at senior leading to retirement. All athlete participants that took part in the study experienced normative and non-normative transitions in their athletic careers (e.g., all athlete participants qualified for the Olympics (normative). Data analysis showed that involuntary retirement due to cutting, injury and failing to qualify for major games was associated with non-normative transition. Athletes had expected to continue with their sport but rather got injured and ended their career.

Reaching and staying at the top in elite sport requires the need to train more intensively (e.g., increased physical and psychological commitment) as well as cope with higher competitive levels (Wylleman et al., 2004). Increased training loads and failure to balance training and competition may lead to a high increased possibility of overtraining,

injury (Markovic & Mikulic, 2010) and even burnout (Smith, Gustafsson, & Hassmen, 2010). The model of human adaptation to transition, Schlossberg et al. (1995) suggests four primary fundamentals of managing transition. Schlossberg and colleagues identified personal control over the transition, Self-efficacy in dealing with the transition, availability of social support during transition, and the individual's coping strategies as crucial in understanding and explaining one's ability to cope with transition. Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavallee, (2004) affirms that, a supportive psychological network (e.g., coach, family, peers), attention to injury prevention, and a gradual developmental athletic career may provide athletes with the possibilities to progress towards high-level competitive sport. The study observed significant challenges that will be discussed further in this chapter. Some of the challenges observed include lack of resources and specialized trained medical personnel. According to Stambulova and Alfermann (2009), the universal knowledge about "athletes in general" seems insufficient to explain the behavior of athletes transition from different cultures. It is therefore crucial to incorporate not only culture but also transitions occurring outside sport (i.e., school) particularly in Southern Africa where there are no transition support services for athletes.

Wylleman and Lavallee (2004) explain that even though athletic factors (e.g., athletic identity and achievement in sport) have a significant influence in athlete's with-career transition as well as retirement transition; there are a lot of factors occurring outside sport (e.g., athletes education, and social support) that impact within-career transition, retirement transition and post-sport career life. The current study observed that graduating from university, part-time and fulltime employment positively facilitated retirement transition. Even though literature in sport psychology is inconclusive in what athletes and members of the entourage need to do to prepare athletes for a post-sport career, results from this study demonstrated that dual-career (job/education and elite sport) were used by athletes and their entourages to prepare for a post-sport career. Pre-retirement planning has been found to broadly influence retirement transition and also positively facilitate retirement transition (Coakley, 1983; Schlossberg, 1981; Yeung, 2013). Results from this are consistent with Cecić Erpič, Wylleman and Zupančič (2004), who observed that quality of sport career termination process depends on the voluntariness of career termination, participant' subjective evaluation of athletic achievements, education status and the occurrence of the negative non-athletic transitions.

One of the primary challenges faced by most elite athletes and their entourage (e.g., parents, coaches, teammates, and federations) is the ability to manage the elite athlete's intense exclusive focus in sports and still build resilience and capacity to meet the many transitions and demands required in both elite performance and life (Anderson, 2009). Even though at least eight athletes in this study had university education, the conflict of sport and school was evident in athletes' careers particularly in the early stages of their careers in sport. There is no doubt that governments, sports federations, sports clubs, and sponsors have put pressure on athletes to excel at the international level more than ever in the history of sports. Pressure to succeed in sport and exclusive focus may lead to athletes dropping out of school to focus in sport. Some of the factors observed in research (Fong, Lin, & Chi, 2003; Lang, 1988; Whitley, 1999) to play a crucial role in influencing student-athletes to dropping out of school to play sport include secondary school grades, repeating a year in school, feelings towards school, and mother's

education. This study observed that athletes perceived graduating from college as a positive way to prepare for a post sport career. This finding is consistent with most literature on retirement transition. Even though dual career is a challenge to a lot of athletes, it is associated with positive athletic retirement transition because athletes move from one career to another instantly (Borggrefe & Cachay, 2012; Corrado, Tessitore, Capranica, Rauter, & Topic, 2012). Research (Aquilina, 2013; Grove, Lavalley, & Gordon, 1997; Park, Tod, & Lavalley, 2012) further demonstrated the need for elite athletes to have a 'dual career' and or long term athlete development to prepare for a post-athletic career while still participating in elite sport. Professional sport is one of the shortest careers that one can undertake; most competitive athletes retire at a young age, which requires athletes to redefine their self and social identity (Baker, Koz, Kungl, Fraser-Thomas, & Schorer, 2013; Witnauer, Rogers, & Saint Onge, 2007). In the United States college sport, approximately 1% of collegiate athletes become professionals' athletes, and the average professional sports career lasts around three and a half years (Beamon, 2010). The athlete and entourage members have to find an alternative career path that would last beyond playing in professional leagues. In the west, dual-career is viewed as a valuable tool for promoting an important contribution to the development of policy actions in the area of sport and education (Corrado et al., 2012). It is therefore crucial for federations and governments to support athletes to find balance between school and sports. Dual career programs maximize athletes' contributions to society by building on the capabilities athletes have developed during their athletic careers. That's that succeed in sport and other careers are great role models to young athletes who may aspire to be play sport professionally.

In addition of lack of retirement transition programs, data analysis indicated that elite athletes faced challenges that include lack financial resources to compete and remain at the top of their elite career in sport. Athletes also experienced injuries that requited specialized trained to work with athletes. Reasons for retirement among some of the athletes were either due to an injury or they did not have financial support to continue with the sport. Burnett, Peters, and Ngwenya (2010), who carried out a study that looked at student-athletes needs observed that students-athletes came from a relatively impoverished backgrounds and that they needed tutoring and more flexibility in completing assignments. Authors also depicts that student-athletes expressed a need for medical coverage and professional rehabilitation services due to constant injuries that comes with training and competing in elite sport. Sport-related injuries are perceived as the biggest threat to the continuation of a sporting career, and, despite being socialized into accepting and even competing with minor injuries, athletes perceive that injuries remain a real threat to their careers (Burnett et al., 2010). A lot of countries around the world have, in the past 20 years, developed programs to help their retiring athletes. The Canadian Olympic Career Centre was created in 1985 to assist Canadian athletes with their careers after elite sports. This was one of the first programs for elite retired athletes in the world. The United States Olympic Committee Career Assistance Program followed in 1988 to give athletes the much needed assistance during their athletic career transitions (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The Athlete Career and Education (ACE) in Australia and the United Kingdom were established to provide elite athletes with career, education and personal development

guidance. National Olympic Committees and federations in Africa should develop similar programs for their athletes so that retiring athletes can make better post-career transitions into life as productive members of their society.

Summary

Athletes begin their athletic careers in school with the support of teachers and parents. The school system in Southern Africa accords athletes to play a variety of sports before specializing in their sport of choice. Different members of the entourage play different roles in athletes' careers. Federations expose athletes to international sports as well as provide developmental programs for junior teams. Graduating from high school and college is an important factor in preparing athletes for retirement transition as well as facilitating retirement transition. Engaging in multiple roles during retirement also facilitated retirement transition such as continuing training as well as being married. Close entourage members such as spouses and parents spent time with athletes during retirement transition. All athletes had full-time jobs during data collection and did not express financial insecurity. Promoting dual-career does not only prepare retirement transition, but also facilitates retirement transition because athletes engage in multiple activities and roles.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, even though there are programs across Southern Africa that introduce athletes to sport, schools provide the most obvious platform for athletes. Teachers are already trained in different disciplines, it is therefore important to provide additional (e.g., life skills) to enhance their skills hence athlete development. The introduction of physical education in Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa provides training for coaches, teachers and students. This also accords schools the opportunity to build sport facilities, which are also used for sport. There is an urgent need for retirement transition programs for retired athletes. It was clear in the data analysis that athletes should at least have a place to go if they needed help with going back to school and or seeking employment.

1. Provide additional training to teachers and coaches, particularly in primary and secondary schools. Based on the findings of this research, it is crucial for teachers to have adequate technical (sport skills) training as well also life skills (skills (e.g., decision making, team work, public speaking, leadership) training. Teachers and coaches ability to teach life skills accords athletes the opportunity to learn skills that are transferrable to post-sport career. Seminars, workshops and educational modules should be used to train teachers and coaches. Collaborative conferences attended by teachers, coaches and federations should be stages at least annually.
2. Federations introduce programs that attract parents to not only provide social and or financial support to their kids but also attend practice and competitions for their kids. Introducing incentive programs (i.e., best parent award) may encourage parents to be involvement in their kids' sport. In some cases, parents trivialized their kid's participation in sport.
3. Provide tutoring service and more support for student-athletes. Flexible study times, coach-teacher interaction and mentorship for student-athletes until at least university level. Athletes who successfully balance school and sport are likely to have a better transition than athletes without university education.
 - a. Provide scholarship programs tailor-made for student-athletes unique challenges (e.g., longer university degree for athletes)
 - b. Provide scholarship programs for retired athletes (e.g., open scholarship for Olympians)
4. Introduce part-time employment/attachment for athletes (e.g., five hours a weeks). Part-time employment accords athletes the opportunity to learn both soft skills (communication, creative thinking, work ethic, networking, problem solving and critical thinking) and hard skills relevant to their field of interest.

5. Provide vocational and professional occupation training for elite athletes, including vocational guidance, soliciting (e.g. resume', interview, curriculum vitae), knowledge of the job market, networking, and career advice.
6. Federations/governments provide relevant career transition training to athletes (through workshops, seminars and provision of pamphlets). Include topics such as, possible advantages of retirement, perceived and expected problems related to retirement, physical/physiological aspects of retirement and decreased levels of athletic activity.
 - a. Pre-retirement counseling
 - b. Career planning/information on jobs and education opportunities
 - c. Financial help/advice
 - d. Readings on how other athletes have dealt with retirement
 - e. Physiological and dietary detraining programme
 - f. Seminars with other retired athletes

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